DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 441 449 IR 057 720

AUTHOR	Bizjak, Vilenka Jakac; Novljan, Silva
TITLE	The Changing Role of the National Library Advisory Service in Slovenia.
PUB DATE	1999-08-00
NOTE	9p.; In: IFLA Council and General Conference. Conference Programme and Proceedings (65th, Bangkok, Thailand, August 20-28, 1999); see IR 057 674.
AVAILABLE FROM	For full text: http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla65/papers/002-111e.htm.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Academic Libraries; *Advisory Committees; Change; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; Library Automation; *Library Development; *Library Networks; *Library Role; *National Libraries; Postsecondary Education; Public Libraries; School Libraries; *User Needs (Information); Users (Information)
IDENTIFIERS	Adviser Role; *Slovenia

ABSTRACT

The National Library in Slovenia was fully authorized to develop on the national level the library network made up of all types of libraries. To fulfill the tasks, a special advisory center/service was founded to perform advising and developing tasks, as well as supervisory tasks. In the last decade, a significant change of its role has come about. The Advisory center actively participates in transforming public libraries into modern information centers on the one hand and into specialized centers for different target groups (juveniles, unemployed, retired person, etc.) on the other hand. (Author/MES)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 441 449

65th IFLA Council and General Conference

Bangkok, Thailand, August 20 - August 28, 1999

Conference Proceedings

Code Number: 002-111-E
Division Number: I
Professional Group: National Libraries
Joint Meeting with: -
Meeting Number: 111
Simultaneous Interpretation: *Yes*

A.L. Van Wesermael

1

The changing role of the National Library Advisory Service in Slovenia

Vilenka Jakac Bizjak
&
Silva Novljan
National and University Library
Ljubljana
Slovenia

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Abstract

The National Library in Slovenia was fully authorized to develop on the national level the library network made up of all types of libraries. To fulfill the tasks a special advisoy centre/servis was founded which performes not only advising and developing tasks but supervisory as well. In the last decade a significant chande of its role came up. The Advisory centre actively participates in transforming public libraries into modern information centres on one side and into specialized centres for different target groups (juveniles, unemployed, retired persons etc) on the other side

Paper

Introduction

When attempting to evaluate the development and the state of the art of a particular library and information system or library network in a country, the appropriate legislation, standards and financial support should be highlighted, as well as system organization on the national level and provision of adequate opportunities to develop the profession. The assesment must be done in the light of general development the country achieved, its public welfare and economic growth. Of course, the status and social standing of the profession are indirectly

IR057720

2

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

bound up with the state policy in this field.

After the World War 2 the national library of Slovenia (which was at that time one of the republics, i.e. federal states, of former Yugoslavia) was fully authorized to develop on the national (actually the federal state) level the library network made up of all types of libraries. By accepting this duty national library did in fact take over from the state a task that should normally be performed by one of the government offices. However, this was not the only duty of the kind bestowed on the national library - education and training of library professionals also fell within its competences due to the fact that, at the time, regular studies in librarianship were organized only on the college and not on the university level.

The introduction of legislation to govern librarianship and legal deposit in Slovenia dates from the early sixties. Thus the 1961 Library Act stipulated the foundation of a special advisory service within the national library. This service did include not only advising and developing tasks but supervisory as well. Standards were set for creation of union catalogues of holdings in libraries in Slovenia. In 1965 and 1968 new acts were passed to establish central cataloguing of national imprints. The National and University Library was also assigned the task of distributing catalogue cards with bibliographic data on national production to other libraries.

Concerning the development of the library network, the decision taken by the national library in the 60's was to base it on the English model of organization and functioning. Additionally to this decision, a special document setting forth the concept of Slovenian librarianship was prepared in 1974, based on guidelines and standards issued by international organisations in 1970 and 1974. Stipulations of this paper were implemented in practice, however, they were not immediately followed by any formal changes of legislation.

It was only the 1982 Library Act that formally and legally incorporated provisions of the above mentioned paper. The Act defined goals and objectives of the libraries, specified their services, management, and organisational structure; postulated the role and duties of the National Library as well as those of other library types (particularly advisory centres on the regional level). The idea of a uniform library & information system to be coordinated by the national library was strongly put forward.

By passing the 1982 Act the Government confirmed and accepted principles which had to be observed in founding and financing libraries. The system eventually came into operation and institutions responsible for development, counselling and supervision were defined. In the mid-eighties standards for single types of libraries were passed. Those standards followed international standards, taking at the same time into account specific local situations and possibilities for application in Slovenia. The development of information and communication technology in the last two decades has brought about tremendeous changes in operation of library and information system.

Therefore it is felt now that all the established standards will soon need to be revised in order to ensure maximum performance of the libraries. We are now discussing the third draft of the new Library Act to be passed within two years, a lapse of time considered to be necessary to address numerous problems an find best solutions. Responsibility for the new legislation is shared between two ministries, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Science and Technology.

The library & information system of Slovenia is made up of the National and University Library (which is in its second function acting as the main library of the University of Ljubljana), three university libraries, 69 academic libraries, 60 public libraries with 247 branch libraries, 167 special libraries and 700 school libraries.

Important institutes of the system are also: R&D Department at the national library, Department for Library and Information Science at the Faculty of Arts and Union of Library

Associations of Slovenia (joining librarians of all library types).

Despite the fact that sources for funding libraries in Slovcenia are very segmented and fall under the competencies of several ministries and local communities, Slovenian library & information system nevetheless works surprisingly well as a fairly consistent whole, which is doubtlessly due to the major role of the national library. At the same time, the system acts as an important component of the national information infrastructure. Along with information centres in research organisations, libraries are very well rooted in the information system. The national library develops and co-ordinates the entire library and information system, at the same time acting as an advisory centre at the national level, thus providing for the unity of the system through the provision of »parent« libraries, the uniform processing of library materials, the uniform way of keeping the catalogues and other documentation on library materials and the existence of union catalogues, the development and coordination of interlibrary lending facilities and continuing education schemes.

The main tasks of the state advisory centre are above all to develope the profession and organize library activities all over the country. Advisory centre takes care of training of library professionals, coordinates acquisition policies and maintains a directory of libraries in Slovenia. The advisory centre supevises and pilots the professional library activities by assessing information of reports handed in by libraries, and through the direct control of their activity. Libraries have to send to the advisory centre all statistical and other data on their professional activities in order for the experts there to survey their performance. The national advisory centre informs the particular library of its findings with the indication of professional deficiencies observed in its activities.

Organization of Public Libraries

The attitude of the State towards librarianship is best reflected perhaps in the public libraries network, since those libraries happen to cover the widest population possible. Their role in spreading literacy, culture and education has long been acknowledged and is considered to be indispensable. Therefore it is of vital importance for the network to be developed in such a way to reach also the remotest places of the country.

Up to the present there have been 60 public libraries in operation in Slovenia, covering 62 local government communities. I have already mentioned that public libraries have been assigned the tasks of parent libraries of respective communities, thus taking on the responsibility for the network within their territory. Altogether they established 246 library branches. Six public libraries provide mobile library services at 781 service points for the needs of the resident population within the area of their own local community and of neighbouring communities.

Public libraries are graded into five types, according to the number of population they serve, primarily on the base of municipality level. However, two basic library types can be identified: libraries processing local history materials with an active role in creating bibliographic records within the co-operative catalogue. This type is represented by libraries, covering municipality areas of more than 50.000 residential population, the second types exercises its activities within the less populated municipalities.

In 1995 a new local community administration was introduced. The number of local communities has doubled since then, which has completely overturned the public libraries network and system. Changes are concerned with founding bodies and their rights, finance, further expansion of services, as well as construction of new library buildings.

The just established new sistem of local government will enable the State (by way of the Ministry of Culture) to spend more money for acquisition of library materials, the newly formed communities themselves, however, will have to take over the financing of running costs of respective local commmunity libraries and development of their activities. This will

definitively prove to be a difficult task to accomplish in particular for all new communities of small size which are going to be preoccupied by problems involved in properly organizing their own functioning.

Library advisory centre of the national library translated the Unesco »Manifesto for Public Libraries« into Slovene language and distributed it to all mayors of newly formed local government communities with the appeal to be used to promote library activities under the motto »no community without the library«. Moreover, the centre also succeeded in its efforts resulting in the provision that libraries were specified as an integral part of the local government facilities in the newly passed Local government law. As part of the respective project, instructions for planning a library network within the local community, intended to be used by public libraries, were issued by the centre.

Library Automation and Networking

Library automation and networking into a library & infomation system started on the national level in 1987. It began with the installation of the common mainframe multi-functional computer and telecomunication infrastructure and with the implementation of the shared cataloguing system COBISS. The overall plan and time-table for the libraries to join COBISS association were designed by the national library in close cooperation with IZUM (The Institute for Scientific Information), which acts as a system host.

The basic principle of the system is founded on cooperative data collecting and distributed data processing. There are about 200 libraries participating in the system, i.e. 20% of all Slovenian libraries. The co-operative database contains about 1,500.000 records, covering all types of publications: monographs, serials, non-book materials, and, to a lesser extent, also journal articles. Operation of the COBISS system is financially supported by all the three ministries. Communication expensses, acqusition and maintenance of hardware and software equipment are covered by the Ministry of Science and Technology. This ministry also provides funds for gaining access to the Internet services. In this way, every Slovenian library, if properly equiped, can access the Internet. The Ministry of Culture financially supports public libraries programmes to join the shared cataloguing system.. On the other hand, the Ministry of Education covers the expenses of school and university libraries that wish to be included into the cooperative system, or want to use a local integrated library system.

The Information Society Age

Due to such developments it came about that libraries in Slovenia, organized in a fairly well run library network at the beginning of this decade, already had quite a clear idea of deficiencies preventing them from fully meeting the needs of information age users; advisory centre of the NUL responded accordingly by initiating activities encouraging their modernization.

Primary goals of centre's educational and advisory activities involving public libraries were as follows: modernization and upgrading of public libraries in terms of library staff proficiency, acquisition of library materials, and technology applied with the view of meeting informational, educational, cultural, and pastime needs of population, which is to manifest itself in the increased numbers of registered users and better use of libraries, their holdings and services.

In order to achieve these goals action plans for the following areas were elaborated:

1. consolidation and expansion of the public libraries network

2. education and training

3. improvement of working conditions in libraries

4. work for target groups, setting up collections of special library materials, introducing new information resources.

Education and training

The degree od modernization of our libraries is most clearly reflected by subjects of educational programmes and in fact more than fifty percent of them are already covering issues and uses of new media and information and communication technology.

A regular service of the national library to public and school libraries are its publications giving information on news, events, and documentation in the field of librarianship in the form of listings of basic literature covering issues confronting public and school libraries, a monthly current awareness bulletin for periodicals of the current contents type (also containing information on forthcoming professional meetings), and a monthly library news bulletin »Knjiznicarske novice«. A complement to these publications is the professional quarterly review »Knjiznica« (The Library), issued by the Union of Library Associations of Slovenia.

With the view of training senior library staff for modern organization and management as required by new conditions special courses are organized by advisory centre in collaboration with the Faculty for Economics of the University of Ljubljana. It was the need to better organize and manage their libraries that also induced the librarians to found a special Union of Public Libraries. This is the body with which the state advisory centre closely collaborates in planning and executing respective actions; the centre also cooperates with another professional body of a. much longer standing, namely the Section for Public Libraries of the Union of Library Associations of Slovenia.

This year the state advisory centre is organizing a study trip to libraries in the Netherlands and an international professional meeting devoted to problems of new technology and library space planning as well as new requirements of nowadays society. The project of writing a handbook on library buildings and equipment (authors are librarians, achitects, experts for conservation and preservation, also economists) is another action that should promote modern, economical, safe, and functional planning of respective activities that are undoubtfully also of great importance for public libraries.

In addition to everything mentioned so far, the advisory centre also founded a working group for juvenile (departments of) libraries with the primary duty of revising and bringing up to date instructions for cataloguing and shelving library materials for juveniles.

The advisory centre has also tried to tackle the issues of improvement of working conditions in the first place by making an analysis of the state of affairs; this is an ongoing task of which the first action to be completed was the revison of the questionnaire of working conditions and work accomplished by public libraries. To this end, a working group for library statistics, made up of selected representatives of public libraries, was established. The group has so far approved uniform definitions and numerical representations of data; novelties of the revised questionnaire were duly presented on a special course to concerned library workers together with an explication of advantages gained by the careful running of statistics. Preparing a draft of the revised version of standards for public libraries in collaboration with respective librarians may also be taken as an endeavour to improve working conditions within this type of libraries. Modernization should be the result of conditions properly utilized in the modern context to meet the needs of individuals for their future development with concurrent emphasis on target users groups that have not been taken sufficiently into consideration by libraries in their developmental endeavours up to now.

The NL advisory centre also provided instructions for planning the bibliobus activities.

A significant instance of collaboration of the national library with public libraries is in the field of local history documentation and activity that deal with events and historical background in the respective »micro location« and are consequently covered by the public library lending and information activity. The collaboration with the national library ensures, however, that local history materials as gathered by public libraries within their territories is processed and properly stored according to uniform standards. To ensure this, respective instructions how to organize the activity generally were provided by the advisory centre itself, for elaboration of issues of education and detailed professional questions, however, a suggestion was passed over to the Union of Library Associations in Slovenia for founding its Section for Local History.

Library Users and Their Needs

The user and his needs, in particular his information needs, have become the leading motto of any library development.

As a consequence, the advisory centre actively participates in transforming libraries into modern information centres, first of all by preparing and promoting guidelines for organizing special information collections, but also by taking part in user training and education schemes that stimulate their own use of information technology and new information resources. Moreover, the centre suceeded in joining public libraries to participate in the Phare project Publica with its own special contribution in promoting library activities in the field of information exchange. The result: libraries have started to build up their own data bases of information resources for general information. Some local governments even contributed their own data thus making true the principle that public information shuld be accessible to everybody in the library as well.

Section for Public Libraries of the Union of Library Association in Slovenia continues successfully to carry out the Publica programme by engaging Slovene librarians as teachers (for workshops, scholarships for visiting foreign libraries). There were also a few visits of representatives of libraries from Western Europe as a consequence of the success of the programme

Work for Users Target Groups

Participation of libraries in continuing education programmes, in particular in programmes for unemployed also represents one of the fields of work for users target groups. Theoretical foundations for the purpose were elaborated by the advisory centre; the next step of the centre was to organize courses with the view of giving the libraries respective instructions or ideas how to collaborate with institutions of adult education. As a consequence, some libraries already offer special services for unemployed e.g. by helping people to find the employment, organizing certain programmes of supplementary education, and the like. Very successful are also the so called knowledge exchanges that have been introduced in some library premises by andragogical centres following the incentive of the NL advisory centre. People joining such programmes exchange, sell and buy knowledge while the library offers the requisite selection of literature as well as other services, increasing in this manner not only the number of registered users but also the use of the library and its materials generally.

In collaboration with andragogical and other educational institutions we can also find in certain libraries what is known as teaching centres which are actually special collections of library materials or, most usually, just certain areas within the library specially furnished to serve the needs of single users groups (juveniles, children, adults), i.e. places where they can also be given help or advice while learning.

In some public libraries we can also find quite successful instances of the university for the third life period: retired persons meet in the library which helps them to attend lectures or

learning courses or just gives them the opportunity also to show their creativity; as 1999 is the international year of the aged, they can also be invited to act as collaborators of the library in offering help to children while learning or be engaged for reading or story telling, and the like.

The advisory centre has also been active in drawing attention to children with learning difficulties and the role public library can play in surmounting them. Library workers have already been told by special educationists which kinds of library materials they should acquire for such children and which are the most suitable instruments of help to be given to them.

Ethnic minorities

The two ethnic minorities of Italians and Hungarians are in addition to children the only groups of population in Slovenia to which special attention has been paid up to now within public library activities. This year, however, the advisory centre in collaboration with a working group of public librarians and with the support of the Ministry of Culture (which alloted special funds for the purpose) have a plan to carry out a revision of library actions concerning minorities. This is to be followed in future by a programme of measures intended to extend library activities on equal footing to all minorities and immigrant groups. Some public libraries have already started project work for the purpose.

School libraries

Latest analysis of the developmental image of school libraries carried out by the NL advisory centre showed that school libraries as well as the school library network are unequally developed. As a consequence of results of this analysis and following the respective initiative of the advisory centre, in close collaboration with the concerned school establishments, have already set to work systematically on the project to ameliorate the situation - the first outcome of this collaboration in the form of a document is an outline scheme of development of school libraries.

After several years of waiting to employ a senior advisor for school libraries the advisory centre finally succeeded in accomplishing this. In company with senior advisers for other types of libraries the new professional will see to it that school libraries will become more active members of the library information system of Slovenia, particularly for those operations that involve processing of library materials and collaboration of libraries in the co-operative catalogue, and that library workers will start to competently educate information conscious users in the technologically modernized libraries. Obligatory primary education makes it namely possible for everybody to get acquainted with the library and to learn to use its services.

Successfully launched programme of modernization of the school libraries enabled the NL advisory centre to introduce the concept of information literacy into the new National Curriculum for primary and secondary schools and to actively collaborate in drawing up the syllabus for acquisition of abilities and skills in the use of libraries and their materials as well as in the utilization of requisite communication and information technologies. Furthermore, the centre also participated in educational activities that were organized for school librarians and other pedagogical workers and involve the introduction of this subject matter into the learning process.

For carrying out its programme varied working methods were utilized: visits to the libraries, instances of personal advice, workshops, sessions and round tables, professional meetings and conferences, research and development projects, questionnaires, public presentations. What is also very important: the centre decided quite early to engage a wide selection of professionals, including professionals from other subject fields (e.g. economists, educationists, psychologists), into programmes for the development and promotion of libraries; professional associations and societies of different origin were also consulted and, not to forget mentioning,

several professional bodies were founded on the initiative of the centre. It was with the help of all these factors that the centre succeeded in so widely spreading the consciousness of existence and importance of libraries on the one side and of complementing attainments of librarians with knowledge of other professions on the other. Notable is also the contribution made by the centre in the field of international cooperation of libraries, based partially on international schemes of financing projects (e.g. by the Soros Foundation), and its efforts to introduce Slovene libraries internationally enabling them thus to compare their own attainments with the developments of libraries abroad.

Latest Revision: *May 26, 1999*

Copyright © 1995-1999
International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions
www.ifla.org